UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

PRESS RELEASES | SPECIAL PROCEDURES

States and companies must end arms transfers to Israel immediately or risk responsibility for human rights violations: UN experts

20 June 2024

Share

GENEVA (20 June 2024) – The transfer of weapons and ammunition to Israel may constitute serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian laws and risk State complicity in international crimes, possibly including genocide, UN experts said today, reiterating their demand to stop transfers immediately.

In line with recent calls from the Human Rights Council and the independent UN experts to States to cease the sale, transfer and diversion

of arms, munitions and other military equipment to Israel, arms manufacturers supplying Israel – including BAE Systems, Boeing, Caterpillar, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Oshkosh, Rheinmetall AG, Rolls-Royce Power Systems, RTX, and ThyssenKrupp – should also end transfers, even if they are executed under existing export licenses.

“These companies, by sending weapons, parts, components, and ammunition to Israeli forces, risk being complicit in serious violations of international human rights and international humanitarian laws,” the experts said. This risk is heightened by the recent decision from the International Court of Justice ordering Israel to immediately halt its military offensive in Rafah, having recognised genocide as a plausible risk, as well as the request filed by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court seeking arrest warrants for Israeli leaders on allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity. “In this context, continuing arms transfers to Israel may be seen as knowingly providing assistance for operations that contravene international human rights and international humanitarian laws and may result in profit from such assistance.”

An end to transfers must include indirect transfers through intermediary countries that could ultimately be used by Israeli forces, particularly in the ongoing attacks on Gaza. The UN experts said that arms companies must systematically and periodically conduct enhanced human rights due diligence to ensure that their products are not used in ways that violate international human rights and international humanitarian laws.

Financial institutions investing in these arms companies are also called to account. Investors such as Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach-Stiftung, Amundi Asset Management, Bank of America, BlackRock, Capital Group, Causeway Capital Management, Citigroup, Fidelity Management & Research, INVESCO Ltd, JP Morgan Chase, Harris Associates, Morgan Stanley, Norges Bank Investment Management, Newport Group, Raven'swing Asset Management, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance, State Street Corporation, Union Investment Privatfonds, The Vanguard Group, Wellington and Wells Fargo & Company, are urged to take action. Failure to prevent or mitigate their business relationships with these arms manufacturers transferring arms to Israel could move from

being directly linked to human rights abuses to contributing to them, with repercussions for complicity in potential atrocity crimes, the experts said.

“Arms initiate, sustain, exacerbate, and prolong armed conflicts, as well as other forms of oppression, hence the availability of arms is an essential precondition for the commission of war crimes and violations of human rights, including by private armament companies,” said the experts.

They said the ongoing Israeli military assault is characterised by indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on the civilian population and infrastructure, including through extensive use of explosive and incendiary weapons in densely populated areas, as well as in the destruction and damage of essential and life-sustaining essential civilian infrastructure, including housing and shelters, health, education, water and sanitation facilities. These attacks have resulted in more than 37,000 deaths in Gaza and 84,000 injured. Of these deaths and injuries, an estimated 70 per cent are women and children. Today, children in Gaza are the largest group of amputee children in the world due to grave injuries sustained in the war. These operations have also resulted in severe environmental and climate damages.

“The imperative for an arms embargo on Israel and for investors to take decisive action is more urgent than ever, particularly in light of states' obligations and companies' responsibilities under the Geneva Conventions, the Genocide Convention, the international human rights treaties, and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights,” the UN experts said.

The experts paid tribute to the sustained work of journalists who have been documenting and reporting on the devastating impact of these weapons systems on civilians in Gaza, and human rights defenders and lawyers, among other stakeholders, who are dedicated to holding States and companies accountable for the transfer of weapons to Israel.

They have also engaged with States, as well as the involved businesses and investors on these issues.

The experts: Robert McCorquodale (Chair), Fernanda Hopenhaym (Vice-Chair), Pichamon Yeophantong, Damilola Olawuyi, Elzbieta Karska, Working Group on business and human rights; George Katrougalos, Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order; **Pedro Arrojo-Agudo**, Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation; **Reem Alsalem,** Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; **Paula Gaviria Betancur,** Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons; **Tlaleng Mofokeng**, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; **Michael Fakhri,** Special Rapporteur on the right to food**; Morris Tidball-Binz,** Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions**; Mary Lawlor,** Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**; Cecilia M Bailliet**, Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity; **Ms. Margaret Satterthwaite,** Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; **Farida Shaheed**, Special Rapporteur on the right to education; **Carlos Salazar Couto (Chair-Rapporteur), Michelle Small, Ravindran Daniel, Jovana Jezdimirovic Ranito, Sorcha MacLeod,** Working Group on the use of mercenaries; **Francesca Albanese,** Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967; **Ben Saul**, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism**; Dorothy Estrada Tanck (Chair), Laura Nyirinkindi (Vice-Chair), Claudia Flores, Ivana Krstić, and Haina Lu,** Working group on discrimination against women and girls**; Astrid Puentes**, Special Rapporteur on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; **Attiya Waris**, Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt; **Marcos A. Orellana,** Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes; **Balakrishnan Rajagopal**, Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing

The Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups are part of what is known as the **Special Procedures** of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures' experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organisation and serve in their individual capacity.

For inquiries and media requests, please contact Alexia Ghyoot (**alexia.ghyoot@un.org**).

For **media inquiries** related to other UN independent experts please contact Dharisha Indraguptha (**dharisha.indraguptha@un.org**) or John Newland (**john.newland@un.org**)

Follow news related to the UN's independent human rights experts on X: **@UN_SPExperts**.

Tags

Israel | Palestine | Adequate housing | Business | Education | Environment | Executions | Food security | Foreign and external debt | Human rights defenders | Independence of judges and lawyers | Internally displaced persons | International order | International solidarity | Mental health | Mercenaries | Terrorism | Violence against women | Water and sanitation | Women | Women and children

Related

PRESS RELEASES

Georgia: Targeted and sustained repression of human rights defenders must stop, says Special Rapporteur

PRESS RELEASES

Special Rapporteur decries Australia's Federal Court ruling further eroding rights to female-only spaces

PRESS RELEASES

Iran: UN experts alarmed by surge in executions, demand moratorium on death penalty

VIEW THIS PAGE IN:

中文 Français

Connect

Contact Us

Follow us

Work With Us

Donate

Contact

Copyrights

Privacy

Terms of use